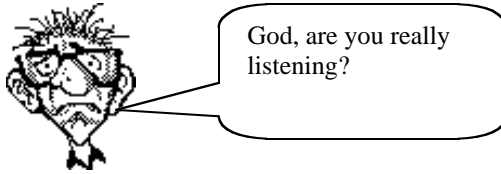


Chapter 8 Moving on with prayer.



When I first met Jesus, I asked Him how He could listen to my prayer and millions of others at the same time. I knew that I had made contact with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but I was not sure how contact from me to Him would work. I had not been trained in any religious traditions, (thank God) and therefore I did not have to “un-learn” any un-scriptural methods of prayer.

I remember one day early, in my walk with the Lord, hearing the Holy Spirit speak to me. He said, “If you will tithe your time and give me 10% of it, I will bless the other 90% beyond your imagination.” I did just that. I determined to give God no less than 2.4 hours per day for prayer and fellowship in His Word. He honored His promise. He multiplies my time like no one else could do.

The first day was awkward. I sat in my auto and said to the Lord, “Okay, I will just pretend that you are sitting here with me, and I will just talk to the windshield and trust that you will hear me.” He heard me, and my prayer time turned into a wonderful event that I now crave more than anything.

I told the Lord that I preferred to read the Word rather than talk to Him. He responded and said, “Reading My Word is prayer. Prayer is nothing but a two-way conversation between you and Me. When you read My Word, I am speaking. There is a time for you to speak.”

Quite often I get into the Word of God or some kind of devotional book before I talk to God. That way I can come closer to praying His will for my life and others. God wants us to pray, but I feel that He wants to give us the prayers He desires for us to pray. The primary prayers I initiate with God are the confession of my sin and weakness, and my praise and worship.

Here is an example of what I mean. God wants to increase Israel, but He asks Israel to pray for His will. “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep” (Ezekiel 36:37).

There are some lessons in the ISOB curriculum on prayer that are very good. One is called “The Flowing River” and another is “Connecting the Crosses.”³

Some of the principles in those lessons have to do with coming into the presence of God during your prayer time. God has left us a map or a pattern to follow which He honors. I am not reducing God to a formula, but some of these steps will help you make contact.

1. Recognize the value of the Cross of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. First, take time first to confess your sins to God. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). When you sin, run to God, not away from Him.

Pour out your heart to Him. This is the most important thing you can do to develop your relationship with Jesus. I have found that He honors me with His presence quickly when I pour out my heart, the good, the bad and the ugly. Take some time to unload everything that is on your heart. When I do this I say, “God, this is how I feel. I know I am wrong, but this is where I am located.” He has always honored this attitude.

2. Get into the Word. Sometimes reading a few Psalms or Proverbs helps. Devotions, books and tapes can be very helpful. The Holy Spirit works with the Word of God. You need to put the Word first place in your life.

3. Take time for thanksgiving, no matter what your circumstances may be. This is very important. God does not honor an ungrateful heart.

4. Take some to give Him your will in exchange for His will. So often we get certain things in our mind that we want God to do. God is not our servant. He wants our will to become lined up with His will.

I can recall one day early in my walk with God when things were just not going my way in business. I was grumbling and complaining to

³ International School of the Bible curriculum is available free at www.isob-bible.org, or you may send email to info@isob-bible.org.

Him. He spoke and said, “Larry, what if I make you a deal? What if I would give you everything you asked for and nothing more or nothing less?” I thought about it for a few minutes and answered, “No way Lord, I have no idea what I need.” He said, “That is correct. But remember Ephesians 3:20, which says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” I answered, “Yes Lord, have your way.”

5. Then take time to do the same thing with your mind and your emotions. Trade them in for His. Discipline your emotions to praise Him. ““For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

6. If you have taken time to walk through these steps, most likely you will find yourself in the presence of God. Sensing His presence is more than just an emotion or a feeling. After some practice you will learn to detect His presence Remember, He lives in you.

So often, when I find myself in His presence, I find that my prayer requests have either vanished or have changed. Many times I feel God giving me a promise in His Word to stand on.

When you feel that God is giving you a promise in His Word, then you can take that and stand on it as a finished work. It may take some time to manifest itself, but it is worth the wait.

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I used to wonder how we could pray without ceasing, without intermission. I now do that. All day long I just stay in touch with God in my spirit. Sometimes it is without spoken words. Often I just pray with my prayer language. At other times I simply thank Him for all He has done. There is a way to experience the presence of God in our lives so that we are in touch with Him all day.

If you ever feel out of touch, do something. It may be just your feelings, which can be unreliable. It may, however, be something you need to seek God about. One of the best rules to follow is; if you are in doubt, press in and find out what is going on. Often we will feel the devil’s oppression. But sometimes God is putting a burden on us to intercede for someone and we are feeling his or her spirit. “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, even those who because of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

There will also be a weaning process in your relationship with the Lord. The parents of a newborn baby quickly respond each time the baby cries. But as the baby matures, the parents may wait a few minutes

before they attend to the child. Later, as the child matures, the parents may even avoid the child's demands as a step towards discipline in patience and in an effort to avoid self-centeredness. This is called weaning. The Lord also weans. He may give you a full-grown "watermelon" as a present when you are a new disciple, but later He may only give you the "watermelon seed." As you continue in your walk with Him, He may even allow that seed to come under attack so that you will grow in faith.

I want to issue a warning to you about this weaning process. So many new believers "feel" the presence of God when they first come to know Him, and then later difficulties come and they fall back because they could not see and feel God working. If you will press in to the Word and prayer, if you will seek the Lord for Him and not just for your own satisfaction, you will not only find Him during the dry times (the weaning period), but your relationship with Him will grow warm and close.

The morning is the best time to pray. I am a morning person, so I can say this easier than some. Please do not feel condemned or criticized by my preference. You may sleep late every day and have a wonderful prayer life which is very pleasing to the Lord. I know God-called intercessors who stay up or get up late at night and pray for hours. I feel that it is important to align yourself with God in His Word in the morning before you do anything else.

I do not wish to put God in any kind of box or set of formulas. However, from what I read in Scripture, there is something special about the morning. I have noticed that demons are very active at night, especially between 10 P.M. and 4 A.M. It seems that the spiritual atmosphere is clearer in the morning. I believe that is why so many people who are called as intercessors prefer to pray during these "dark" hours. My wife and I especially noticed this during our mission trips to Haiti. The Voodoo activities hit their peaks between 10 P.M. and 4 A.M. I know that demons are active all the time, even during the day, but there seems to be an intensity at night. "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day" (Psalms 91:5).

I pray all day, but if I do try to do anything in the morning without first making contact with God, my day just does not work as well. It seems like there is a special blessing if we start with God, His Word, and prayer.

Psalms 5:3 says, "In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

Psalm 88:13 says, “But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.”

Mark 1:35 says, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Exodus 34:4 says, “And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.”

Exodus 19:13 says, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’”

Psalm 55:17 indicates that anytime is the right time to pray. It says, “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”

If you are not sure how to pray, pray the Word. (Chapter 16 covers this subject completely; the following is just an outline). One of the most powerful ways to intercede for yourself and others is to pray the Word. Take the Word of God and put it on your lips and speak it out.

Jesus takes our confession and makes it powerful. Hebrews 3:1 says, “Therefore, holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” When we speak God’s Word, Jesus takes it to the Father and asks Him to perform it. Then we can enter into rest and let the Word do the work. Hebrews 4:1 says, “Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Angels go to work when they hear God’s Word. (Psalms 103:20)

Demons flee! (Psalms 149:5-9)

Prayer must be developed between you and God as something personal and real. Ask Him to teach you and He will.

The biggest thing with prayer is to be real with God!